

Provision of Religiously Appropriate Meals in Long-Term Care Homes

Date: August 22, 2016

To: Community Development and Recreation Committee

From: General Manager, Long-Term Care Homes & Services

Wards: All

SUMMARY

City Council directed the General Manager, Long-Term Care Homes & Services, in consultation with the Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer and the Toronto Office of Partnerships, to report to Community Development and Recreation Committee with a sustainable funding and program delivery strategy for religiously appropriate meals in City of Toronto Long-Term Care homes. This report provides information on that direction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Long-Term Care Homes & Services recommends that:

1. City Council request the provincial government develop a separate, case specific funding mechanism for the provision of cultural and religious meals in long-term care homes, and provide the requisite funding.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact arising from this report. The report requests the provincial government to develop a separate, case specific funding mechanism and provide the requisite funding for the provision of cultural and religious meals in long-term care homes.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Long-Term Care Homes & Services is guided by its CARE values: Compassion, Accountability, Respect, Excellence. Shared by all stakeholders, they drive culture, priorities, and provide a framework in which all decisions are based.

The "Respect" value is clearly articulated: We are committed to upholding resident/client rights and respecting diversity; by embracing our differences and supporting others we demonstrate fairness, inclusion and equity. We live this value, every day by:

- Embracing the diversity of all people;
- Ensuring decisions are sensitive to religious, moral and cultural issues;
- Providing individualized care that enables people to be as independent as possible;
- Responding to emerging local community needs.

LTCHS is committed to providing a co-ordinated and comprehensive approach to resident care that recognizes the holistic needs, values, strengths and desires of each individual resident and client. In meeting the needs of residents for food that is prepared in accordance with their faith traditions, it is important that the City of Toronto demonstrate fairness and equity by offering this service to all the various religious affiliations, including Islam, Judaism and others as may be required.

DECISION HISTORY

City Council on February 17, 2016 adopted the amended "2016 Capital and Operating Budgets" including direction for a report back to Community Development and Recreation Committee, as part of the 2017 budget process for a sustainable funding and program delivery strategy for religiously appropriate meals.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.EX12.2>

COMMENTS

The City of Toronto Long-Term Care Homes & Services (LTCHS) is home to residents from more than 50 countries of origin that speak at least 38 different languages and practice/observe 34 diverse faiths/denominations. In keeping with the City of Toronto's motto, Diversity Our Strength, and to meet the needs of residents and improve access to care, special language and cultural services including Armenian, Cantonese, French, Ismaili, Japanese, Jewish, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Tami, are offered at select homes.

In May 2016, Accreditation Canada, when awarding "Accredited with Commendation" to LTCHS, noted the division goes beyond the requirements of the Qmentum accreditation program: "It is evident the organization has a client- and family-centred care model, and that residents and families assist in decision making in the homes ... the organization is known for its work in embracing diversity when advocating and caring for vulnerable persons. Providing programs throughout Toronto, the organization serves a very diverse population. It is seen as a leader in serving those of different ethnic origins..."

Food is closely associated with culture – whether it be celebratory meals for Tamil residents, kosher meals for Jewish residents or Korean, Chinese or South Asian delicacies offered as part of a recreation activity, preferences are evolving – as one is met, others are identified by equity seeking groups. LTCHS has a long-established commitment and openness to working with the community and inviting them into the homes as these relationships bring richness to the environment, helping to shape a unique culture while promoting public accountability.

LTCHS, through the Toronto Office of Partnerships (TOP), met with community representatives from the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs to discuss the potential of receiving religious meals as a donation and the issuance of charitable tax receipts to groups and individuals providing kosher meals for residents in long-term care homes. Positive discussions have yet to result in actual commitments from the community, but LTCHS continues to seek partnerships with not-for-profit agencies to supply religiously appropriate meals for identified residents. LTCHS has also met with United Jewish Appeal and Canadian Multifaith Federation (previously known as the Multifaith Alliance) on this issue.

Meals to Residents

The City of Toronto operates ten (10) long-term care homes with 2,641 approved beds. Each resident is served three (3) meals plus snacks each day, for an overall annual total of 2,891,895 meals based on a 365 day year. A new three-week menu, which is developed in collaboration with residents, is introduced each year and seasonal choices are offered during the spring and summer months. Residents are offered a choice of entrée, vegetable and dessert at lunch and dinner each day. Residents are consulted in the menu planning process and their input is critical in developing a menu that satisfies their needs and their wishes. Residents' food committees offer an opportunity for residents to comment on menus as they are developed and on an ongoing basis to influence meals and quality of the dining service.

LTCHS offers menu choices in all required consistencies, such as regular, minced and pureed consistency. Each lunch and dinner meal choice includes two (2) regular entrees, two (2) minced entrées, two (2) pureed entrées, two (2) regular vegetables, two (2) minced vegetables, two (2) pureed vegetables, two (2) regular desserts, two (2) minced desserts and two (2) pureed desserts. In addition, the menu may include soup that would require texture modification and a starch item such as potatoes that would also require texture modification.

Residents will frequently have specific strategies in their care plan to address and support religion and ethnicity, while still receiving their meals based on the standard menu. LTCHS works with residents and families in providing meals and snacks that support residents' diverse cultural needs, eating habits and religious beliefs. This approach promotes residents' optimal nutrition intake, health and wellbeing and improves resident satisfaction and supports cultural diversity in the homes. For example, individual discussions may indicate a minimum level of observance and previous faith practice. For some Jewish residents, this includes no pork or shellfish

and/or no mixing of meat with milk or milk products but not the requirement for separately prepared meals and dishes.

There are an increasing number of residents requiring varying types of individualized vegetarian meal plans related to cultural and ethnic backgrounds of residents in many of the homes. Toronto's homes are currently providing 88 individual menus, these usually address clinical needs and may include therapeutic diets such as restricted gluten and restricted lactose, and modified renal.

Texture and fluid modification is frequently required in the long-term care setting to support adequate nutrition and safe meal times for those with a decreased ability to chew and/or swallow. In City homes, there are 38 residents receiving their nutrition via feeding tube.

Legislative Requirements

LTCHS continuously strives to meet compliance with legislation and regulations and staff believe the City is meeting its legislative obligations for the accommodation of special dietary requirements. Nevertheless, when an individual has lived their entire life eating certain foods that are important to their religious beliefs or cultural heritage, there is an ethical responsibility placed on long-term care homes to not only meet the minimum legislative standards, but to also meet community and customer expectations.

The *Long-Term Care Homes Act (LTCHA)*, 2007, specifies under *O.Reg 79/10 26. (3) (22)*, that a plan of care must be based on, at a minimum, inter-disciplinary assessment of the following with respect to the resident: cultural, spiritual and religious preferences and age-related needs and preferences. To meet this requirement the standard LTCHS menu contains a variety of foods, many of which are identifiable with specific cultures, such as Sweet and Sour Pork, Butter Chicken, Souvlaki, Asian style Chicken Soup, Lasagna, Ravioli, Vegetable Bean Masala, Perogies, and Middle Eastern Chicken. Each home is able to provide some menu adaptation in order to better serve groups of residents with similar taste preferences.

Ministry Inspections

While the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) has previously issued compliance orders to LTCHS because inspectors did not believe the division went far enough in the provision of kosher meals, the MOHLTC orders were vague and unclear as to what exactly was expected from a long-term care home concerning the provision of "kosher" meals as there are a wide variety of practices with respect to the consumption of kosher food within the Jewish faith.

On the more restrictive end of the scale, "keeping kosher" would mean eating only religiously certified kosher food, prepared in a separate kosher kitchen and served using a separate set of plates and cutlery, which were used exclusively for meat or dairy foods. In addition, during Passover, religiously certified kosher for Passover food, a separate Passover kitchen, and separate Passover meat and Passover dairy plates and cutlery would be required. A more restrictive standard might also require the long-term care home to have separate staff handling the kosher food.

On the less restrictive end of the scale, eating a vegetarian diet or a diet which does not combine dairy products with meat and is free from pork and seafood (which is what has been generally offered at the City's long-term care homes) is considered keeping kosher by some members of the Jewish faith.

Funding for Resident Meals

As of July 1, 2016, the raw food funding per diem provided by the MOHLTC is \$8.33 for three (3) meals including a protein, starch and vegetable, two (2) snacks and three (3) between meal beverages. LTCHS provides meals to residents within this funding allocation. The raw food portion of the accommodation funding envelope includes food materials used to sustain life, including supplementary substances such as condiments, prepared therapeutic supplements, and food for special events including seasonal, cultural, religious and ethnic celebrations.

While the MOHLTC sets the amount of funding allocated to what is referred to as "Raw Food", residents contribute funds through a co-payment for their accommodation that is established annually through provincial regulation. Residents that are unable to pay the full accommodation rate are entitled to apply for a rate reduction. The MOHLTC does not provide additional funding for ethnic, cultural or religious meal requirements for residents in long-term care homes.

In its 2016-17 Provincial Budget Priorities document, the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors (OANHSS) made thirteen (13) recommendations, two specific to food, noting that the current food budget is simply inadequate while at the same time noting that food and the eating experience are tremendously important to the physical, social and emotional well-being of long-term care residents.

Specifically, OANHSS Recommended to the provincial government that the:

- MOHLTC budget for a 7.7% (\$0.62) increase to the raw food per diem to compensate for variance between actual food costs and funding levels over the past five years. (The provincial government responded with an increase of 3.7% (\$0.30), which took effect on July 1, 2016.)
- MOHLTC to develop a separate, case specific funding mechanism for the provision of cultural and religious meals. (To date, there has been no response to this recommendation.)

LTCHS Provision of “religiously appropriate meals”

Prior to and upon admission, Long-Term Care Homes & Services advises residents and family that LTCHS homes are not kosher or halal equipped facilities. The multi-disciplinary care team try to accommodate dietary requirements through its standardized menu or where necessary individualized meal planning. Cultural and ethnic foods will continue to be incorporated into the standard menu and through individualized meal plans as may be required.

Kosher Diet

The Kosher diet is based on the Biblical rules for food (dietary laws) for the Jewish religion. Only Kosher meats and poultry are allowed. Shellfish and pork are not allowed. All foods except for fresh fruits and vegetables must be produced under Kosher Standards and have appropriate hechsher (symbol for Kosher). Milk and milk products may not be consumed with meat. Separate dishes, glasses and utensils must be used for dairy versus meat meals. A home that does not have a kosher kitchen may choose to use disposables dishes and cutlery for all meals. Milk and milk products may be consumed immediately before a meat meal, but not with a meat meal. The individual must wait 6 hours after eating meat before dairy can be consumed. Eggs may be eaten with milk or meat. Foods that are considered neutral (or pareve or "parve") such as fruits, vegetables, grains, eggs, and non-dairy beverages may be eaten with any meal.

Kosher kitchens keep two completely separate kitchens to separate equipment, dishes and silverware (one for meat and one for dairy meals). Saturday is the Sabbath day (day of rest), and no food may be cooked or heated on the Sabbath. Pre-cooked frozen meals may be purchased but may be reheated in a non-kosher oven by covering with two layers of foil, or in a non-kosher microwave, by double wrapping the food.

Halal Foods

Muslims around the world practice the religion of Islam. The practice of Islam includes observing dietary laws which come from Islamic teachings. Islamic dietary laws define foods that are Halal, meaning lawful or permitted. For meat and poultry to be Halal, it must be slaughtered according to Islamic dietary laws (Zabihah). Muslims avoid food and beverages that are Haram, meaning not permitted, including pork and its by-products, alcohol and foods prepared with alcohol, foods containing blood and blood by-products and foods made with pure or artificial vanilla extract. Many foods are clearly Halal or clearly Haram. However, certain foods are difficult to classify because of the ingredients they contain.

Vegetarianism within Religion

Vegetarianism is strongly linked with a number of religions that originated in ancient India including Jainism, Hinduism and Buddhism. Vegetarianism is an expected practice among Jains. Hinduism encourages a vegetarian diet, though not all Hindus are vegetarian; Hindus almost universally avoid beef since they consider the cow (Krishna's favourite animal) sacred. The Buddha in certain Mahayana sutras strongly denounces the eating of meat and the Chinese religion of Taoism holds nature as sacred and favors vegetarianism.

Increased awareness of culturally acceptable foods improves the division's ability to meet the needs of a diverse society. LTCHS recognizes the importance of taking into consideration each individual's perspective on cultural and religious practice. The Registered Dietitians assess each resident upon admission. This individualized assessment includes food preferences, usual eating patterns, diet history and cultural and religious influences on eating habits. Some residents entering long-term care easily adapt to a long-term care home menu while others may only consume foods that are familiar, culturally acceptable and adhere to religious practices. Many residents fall between these two groups. All are individually assessed with the assistance of the family and the home will work towards meeting their needs.

Where kosher or halal meals are deemed a religious requirement LTCHS has a limited ability to respond, in that the preparation of kosher or halal meals cannot be done on site. Accordingly, where LTCHS cannot meet the religious needs of a resident by adapting its menu, it will supply these meals by contracting with a meals on wheels provider. A pilot of this service is currently being tested by the division.

Complexity and Diversity of Resident Population

Future demographics and admission patterns are unknown and there is no firm mechanism to determine which residents may require religious foods, therefore self-declaration may increase demands and associated costs as more and other equity seeking groups advocate that additional religious or cultural foods be routinely supplied.

The ability of LTCHS to determine need is sometimes complicated by the fact that residents and their families are not always in agreement of the requirement for kosher or halal meals. Residents selecting the meals on wheels kosher or halal options may occasionally discard the meal in favour of one of the meals that is on the home's standard menu thereby increasing cost and waste.

LTCHS may still receive complaints from residents and/or their families if the food supplied by the kosher and halal meals vendor does not meet their personal expectations. As the City's long-term care homes do not have the ability to cook and serve fresh kosher or halal meals, the only viable option to better meet the religious needs of long-term care residents is for the City to order from an external supplier.

LTCHS residents in the future will continue to be increasingly diverse in terms of their country of origin and their faith. Along with this comes a myriad of eating styles and food wishes. Some residents may only want to consume foods that are familiar, culturally acceptable and/or adhere to specific religious practices.

LTCHS will communicate, review, document and modify as necessary to best address religiously appropriate meals for its residents. This approach will include:

- Continue to accommodate dietary requirements through its standardized menu or where necessary individualized meal planning
- Continue to communicate clearly to prospective residents and their families that City of Toronto long-term care homes are not kosher or halal equipped facilities
- Continue to seek partnerships with not-for-profit agencies to supply religiously appropriate meals for residents requesting such
- The purchase of off-site prepared kosher and halal meals that will be delivered to the residents when specifically requested and required by the resident as part of their religious observance
- Ensure the vendor of kosher and/or halal meals provide resident meals in all required consistencies, such as regular, minced and pureed.

LTCHS serves a very diverse resident population with many cultures, religions, ages and dietary requirements. LTCHS does the best it can within the resources currently available using standardized menus and offering variety and individualized meal plans.

LTCHS homes are not kosher or halal equipped facilities and none of the City's current facilities have kosher kitchens or the requisite cutlery or dishes. An opportunity may exist in future for the City to consider constructing a kosher kitchen, within the LTCHS Capital Renewal Plan, but even with a kosher kitchen in one home, the challenge of providing kosher meals in other Toronto homes would still exist.

The City of Toronto's long-term care homes will continue to consult with residents and family members to create and alter, as needed, individualized resident meal plans to support diverse cultural needs, eating habits and religious beliefs and to promote optimal nutrition intake, health, well-being, quality of life and satisfaction.

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SIGNATURE

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